

THE ANCIENT WISDOM



A Study Course

based on

The ANCIENT WISDOM by Annie Besant

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THE ANCIENT WISDOM.

CHAPTER I. BEGINNINGS. THE PHYSICAL PLANE.

TOPICS — *THE ONE EXISTENCE* — Whence? Whither? Its Purpose. Source of all Beings.
Hence — Unity of all Beings — (Brotherhood.)
Divinity of all Beings — (Made in the Image of God,
God themselves.)
Purpose of all Beings — (Evolution. Perfection.)

LAW OF PERIODICITY — Outbreathing and Inbreathing.

SOURCE OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM — A LOGOS. His three-fold Aspect — Will, Wisdom, Activity.
His three-fold Manifestation — Three Outpourings.

SEVEN PLANES OF NATURE — Corresponding Bodies.

PHYSICAL PLANE — Its two Divisions.
Importance of the Physical Plane.
Our Responsibility to the Physical Plane.
Purification of the Physical Body.
Development of "Skill in Action".
Function of the Etheric Double.
Sleep — Death.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION — *THE ONE EXISTENCE.*

Result of the realization of the Unity of Life; its effect upon our relationship towards (1) Supermen, (2) our fellow-men, (3) the lower kingdoms.

To what extent is the spirit of Unity manifested in Religion; Philosophy; Education; Art; Business; Philanthropy; Politics; Social Conditions; International Relationship?
What are WE doing to help that realization?

LAW OF PERIODICITY

— Its application to the Spiritual Life.
Alternating periods of enthusiasm and dryness.
How to learn balance from both.

THE TRIPLE LOGOS

— Study the reflection of Will, Wisdom and Activity
(1) In yourself. What aspect is predominant in you?
What aspect do you need most?
Is it best to intensify your temperament?
or, is it best to add to what is weak?
(2) In others. Study them *sympathetically*, so as to understand and help, instead of criticizing.
Which aspect is now predominant in the world?

TRACING A "SPHERE IN SPACE." —

Each one has his universe, his sphere of influence:
(family, friends, community, country, etc.)
How much of the Divine Plan do you reflect in your universe?
With what "Skill in Action" do you help evolution within your universe, human and non-human?

Are Joy and Affection the key-note of your creative activity?

PHYSICAL BODY

— Duty of having a good, pure and healthy body.
(Study the work done by Physical Culture people, etc.)
To what extent do you live according to the axiom "Pure food, pure thought, a constant Memory of God?" (Find definite instances where you have done so—not mere generalities.)
How much Beauty do you put into your life? Into your surroundings?
Are those within your universe, your sphere of influence, happier because you are living?

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CHAPTER II. THE ASTRAL PLANE.

TOPICS — The Astral Plane, its Matter and Sub-divisions.

Difficulty of seeing correctly on the Astral Plane. Reason for that difficulty.

Two kinds of psychism: the past (Atlantean); the future.

Danger of following the various methods of occult development taught all over the country for the gaining of powers, etc.

The wisest and most sensible way of handling nascent psychic faculties.

The Astral Body; the Desire Elemental.

Immense importance of the Desire Nature.

Purification of the Desire Nature.

Inhabitants of the Astral Plane.

(Thought and Emotion Forms will be studied in Chapter IV.)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

What characteristics show a well-balanced emotional nature?

How closely do your emotions and thoughts work together?

Do emotions control thoughts? Do thoughts control emotions?

Or do emotions add love, sympathy, warmth to thought?

Do thoughts add poise, unselfishness, serenity to emotions?

To know your present stage of emotional evolution and purification, *observe your first automatic reaction to sudden happenings.*

Your second response is usually the intellectual recognition of what you try to be—*not what you are.*

Study the influence of emotions upon (1) yourself; (2) your family; (3) people you meet; (4) the non-human in your sphere of influence.

(Examples: Do excited people become calm because of your calm attitude?

Do they become friendly in response to your friendliness, etc.?

Study your influence *as it is now.* (Recollect special cases in which your emotions reflected themselves in others.)

Study your influence *as you would like it to be.*

What are you doing to fulfil your ideal?

Study the difference of result, if you (1) simply do what you desire. (Desire ruling).

(2) Do what you think you ought to do as a painful duty. (Thought ruling).

(3) Make of your whole life a joyous creative act. (Thought and emotion gladly working together).

How successfully is your work done when you are (1) optimistic, (2) pessimistic?

What is the condition of your health when you are (1) optimistic, (2) pessimistic?

Distinguish which of your desires and emotions are your own, or are due to the collective emotional atmosphere of your surroundings.

Study and recognize national thoughts, prejudices and emotions in

Religion; education; literature;

Political and social attitudes; the Press, etc.

In which of those branches of human activity can you recognize progress made towards a broader viewpoint?

What are you doing to help that progress?

How are you co-operating with those who are trying to do so?

What place has Beauty in your life?

To what extent have your efforts in that direction already modified your universe, your sphere of influence?

What is being done along that line in your country? How are you co-operating?

State the advantages and disadvantages of Hero Worship.

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CHAPTER III. KAMA LOKA.

- TOPICS — Kama Loka, or Purgatory; its objects and results.
Describe the change taking place in the Astral Body after death.
State reasons for the formation of shells; their advantages and disadvantages.
Study the seven purgatories, and show the perfect sequence of *cause* in earth life and *effect* in the astral life.
Changes in consciousness brought about by experience in purgatory.
Are desires conquered in that condition?
How does life in purgatory affect the following incarnation?
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PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

- What should be the attitude of a Theosophist towards death?
Give reasons therefor.
You can prove to yourself if that attitude is developed in you
 (1) When you are dangerously ill, with a possibility of death.
 (2) When some one you love is in that condition.
 (3) When death has claimed some one near and dear to you.
Then is the time when our attitude towards death impresses people around us.
Can you recollect cases where you have thus impressed people?
In doing so, have you been careful to make them realize that your attitude was one of loving understanding—not of indifference.
Why is it important that people should have a sane understanding of death?
Describe the influence of the thoughts and emotions of the “living” upon the “dead”, for good and evil.
Has the attitude towards death become more rational in your community?
If so, to what do you attribute the change?
Study the subject of Invisible Helpers; the need for their work; the qualifications required to become an Invisible Helper.

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CHAPTER IV. THE MENTAL PLANE.

TOPICS — The Mental Plane, its Matter; its two Divisions and their sub-divisions.

Our two bodies belonging to the Mental Plane.

Their respective characteristics and functions.

Three stages of mental development in human evolution.

Growth and purification of the lower mental body.

Growth of the higher mental, or causal body.

Individuality and Personality.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION — *The Lower Mental Body*, its training and activities.

Nearly all thoughts have an emotional element and are the joint product of Kama-Manas, always linked together in man by H.P.B.

Therefore see Chapter II (Astral Plane) as regards the study of thoughts, emotions and prejudices in religion, business, politics, etc.

THOUGHT POWER — Creative instrument of Man the Thinker.

Its tremendous importance. "As a man thinketh so is he."

Realize the power of our thought, spoken or unspoken, by watching

(1) its influence for good or evil upon your family, your friends and acquaintances.

Recollect, if possible, definite instances when your silent thought was caught and expressed by another; when your mode of thinking gradually colored the mental atmosphere around you; when your thoughts of joyous optimism, or of anxiety, as the case may be, helped, or injured, a suffering friend.

(2) its influence upon our body. You may find that some physical ailment, a cold, a headache, etc. will follow within 24 hours upon a thought of criticism, depression, worry, etc.

Mental ill-health reflects itself in physical ill-health.

Restore spiritual harmony, and physical harmony—health—may be restored. (Some

Karmic cases may work out too slowly for observation, but the LAW is unfailing.)

Having realized your present mental power, what power would you like to become within your sphere of influence? Be quite definite about it.

CONCENTRATION — A necessary element in strong and effective thinking.

What is your present power of concentration?

(1) How many minutes can you keep your mind fixed without wavering upon an uninteresting object, a pen, a pencil, a box, etc.? Time yourself.

(2) Can you read two pages, or even one page, of a *serious* book without letting your mind wander?

(3) Can you give your whole attention to any of your humble daily tasks without vaguely drifting mentally?

(4) How successfully can you think *consecutively* in meditation, in study?

SOME PRACTICES IN CONCENTRATION —

(1) Concentrating on an object, a knife, a vase, a picture postcard, etc.

Examine it with full attention for three minutes; the next day, recall your mental image of it; then compare the image with the object.

That practice, if done regularly and perseveringly, will develop, not only the power of concentration, but also of accurate observation and an improved memory.

(2) Give full attention to everything you are doing.

Is it good to think of our humble tasks while doing them?

Is it better to "meditate on spiritual things" while doing chores?

Can you do *well* two things at the same time?

Is such meditation as mentioned above more than a vague dreaming?

(3) As your power of concentration grows, can you check the idle flow of disconnected thoughts which pass through the mind as a continuous stream, ejecting at once the undesirable ones and replacing them by that which is good?

If so, you are becoming more and more the master of your mind.

That stream is merely the mental atmosphere that surrounds you and continuously passes in and out.

As it is charged with national prejudices and narrowness, to check it will help you to overcome your own prejudices and to broaden your viewpoint.

RESULT OF PRACTICE — The building of an effective mental instrument.

Changing mental restlessness into calm concentration

Inaccuracy into accuracy and truth

Mental vagueness into efficiency.

BUILDING OF CHARACTER — Through the creative power of Imagination, the Image-making faculty. "Become what you are."

Meditation on

(1) *A Virtue* — the one you need and want.

See yourself in meditation as possessing and expressing it.

It is in you, God in you is all perfection.

Recall and practise it all day long.

That is bound to release it and make it manifest.

(2) *A Person* — one you love and reverence, who exemplifies the character which is your ideal.

As you contemplate such an one, you grow into his likeness.

(3) *An Ideal*, if preferred. We become what we meditate on.

Contemplation — Having meditated on the various aspects of your chosen Ideal, stop thinking, and with intense aspiration, as if listening to a "still small Voice", contemplate in the silence of your heart the Divine Perfection of that Ideal.

Its creative life will gradually transform you into its living reflection.

THOUGHT FORMS — We cannot think without giving birth to a form which helps or injures, as the case may be.

In order to realize fully your responsibility, study if possible *Thought Forms* by Dr. Besant and C. W. Leadbeater.

Note the shape as well as the color and definiteness of those mental creations.

STUDY YOUR OWN THOUGHT FORMS — as

(1) *Thoughts about yourself.*

They remain around you as a shell through which you see and judge everything.

They beat against you, making you think the same thing over and over again.

They tend to make it impossible for us to grasp a new viewpoint, to initiate new modes of thinking.

They cramp and stifle us.

Therefore — When you find yourself thinking about yourself, it is good to turn your thought to something else, someone needing help, some point in your study, etc. (This does not apply to the deliberate examination of the lower self in the light of the Higher Self.)

Examples of such shells — *Self-pity* makes a cage of gloom. "No one understands me."

That means usually that we are too self-centered to understand others! *Habitual misjudgment* of one we don't like makes us blind to any quality he may possess, etc.

(2) *Thoughts about others* — Every unkind thought sent to another

(1) hurts and wounds

(2) increases in him the fault we criticize, if it be there

(3) tends to develop it, even if it is not in him

(4) Therefore makes it more difficult for God to manifest in him.

Hence — *Crime* of unkind judgment, even if true, of criticism and gossip.

On the other hand — Every good thought sent to another

(1) helps and strengthens the good manifested in him

(2) awakens the good still dormant

(3) helps God to shine in him.

Hence — Our creative power for good.

(3) *Thoughts not directed to anyone* — Form a “trail in space.”

Such thoughts add all the time to the mental atmosphere around us either germs of mental disease which contaminate others, or germs of spiritual influence which quicken the corresponding germs in them. What germs are you adding to the mental atmosphere of your family? Your community? Your country?

HELPING OTHERS BY THOUGHT — At first deliberately, then automatically; *presenting* help, never *imposing* it.

Has your power of observation developed in you the intuition which at once recognizes when help is needed? Not only needed by those you know and love, but by some unknown depressed person on the street car, some angry man on the street, etc.

A quick response of life to life shows an increasing realization of Unity.

Do you carry an influence of cheer and sympathy wherever you go? Does everyone who comes near you, leave you, smiling more brightly, standing more erect?

What are *you* doing in the world of the LOGOS with your mind which is part of *His Mind*?

THE CAUSAL BODY

Body of the Ego, enduring throughout human evolution.

Realize clearly the place and function of the Individuality and the Personality in human evolution.

How closely do both co-operate and work together in

- (1) the unevolved man
- (2) the ordinary man
- (3) the man aspiring to tread the Path
- (4) the spiritually developed man

Where do you place yourself? Why?

How much of your daily life is inspired by the Ego?

How much by the personal elementals?

(A review of the day done at night would help in that realization. Learn thereby to distinguish between the will of the Ego and astral impulses.

Does the Ego always take much interest in his personality? (Give your reasons for your opinion.)

What are you—the personality—doing to make it worth while for you—the Ego—to take notice of his personal instrument?

How would meditation and contemplation help in linking up the Ego and personality, so that his will can reach the brain consciousness?

Is it sufficient to meditate and contemplate to bring about that result? What more is needed?

If you are on the Path of Action, is Service alone sufficient? (See *Light on the Path*.)

Think deeply over the fact that *no evil can be built into the Causal Body*.

Hence — Good only is permanent, evil is only the “not yet good.”

Just as — Darkness is only “not light.”

Bring a light into a dark room; where is the darkness?

Know therefore that — (1) the good in the wrong-doer is the only reality.
(2) the evil is only misapplied power, destined to be transmuted into good.

Realize that — (1) When you see *good* in a man, you are in touch with the Ego in him, helping him to train his personality
(2) When you dwell on the evil in him, you are only in touch with his personal elementals and strengthening them.

How would such a realization affect your judgment of *all men*, good and evil, and your relationship to them? Which man is apt to progress more quickly:

- (1) a man full of misapplied power?
- (2) a man negatively and weakly good?

Realize further that only the *unselfish* can be built into the causal body, that which is purified from all selfish personal element.

How much of the essence of each one of your day's activities is worthy of being built into the body of the Ego, for his use?

FACE YOURSELF FRANKLY.

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CHAPTER V. DEVACHAN.

TOPICS — *The Heaven Life*; its two stages; its length and richness.

Reality of the Heaven Life; its Purpose and Results.

The four Heavens of the Lower Mental Plane.

Higher Mental Plane Consciousness of men at various stages of Evolution.

Individuality. Personality. A "Life Period."

The binding element that brings men back into Incarnation.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

Compare conditions on earth with those in Heaven and learn from the following:

- (1) In Heaven, we see only the mental images we make of our friends; how much more of them do we see down here?
- (2) In Heaven, we see only the good in our friends; here we are only too conscious of their faults.
Which is the truer vision? Why?
- (3) In Heaven, communications are flashed from Ego to Ego, therefore always true and loving.
Here, communications are mostly distorted by our use, or misuse, of clumsy words which often wound and injure.
Which communications are truer, more helpful?

What can we do to raise ourselves to the more spiritual level of consciousness of the Heaven Life?

PURPOSE AND RESULT OF THE HEAVEN LIFE —

Assimilation of experiences and building them into faculties.

We need not wait until we are in Heaven to do that.

We can make of each day a Heaven life by

- (1) trying to judge each experience, pleasant or unpleasant, as it comes, with the serene understanding of the Heaven consciousness, learning the lesson each has to teach, and using that knowledge to live more nobly.
We are doing that even now, vaguely, mostly unconsciously;
Do it now *deliberately*. Sum up your gain at the close of the day.
- (2) The next morning, recall in meditation your gain of the preceding day and apply it during the new day.
Life loses its bitterness when thus lovingly understood.
Thus can we live in Heaven while still on earth.

THE FOUR GRADED HEAVENS, counting from the lowest upward:

- (1) Love of family and friends.
- (2) Unselfish devotion to a personal Deity.
- (3) Love of God expressed in service to the world.
- (4) Pure and unselfish pursuit of Art, Science, Literature, etc.
How true and just does that classification seem to you?
What conclusions can you draw from it for your own guidance?

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CHAPTER VI. BUDDHIC AND NIRVANIC PLANES.

TOPICS — *The Buddhist and Nirvanic, or Atmic Planes.*

Their Matter and Subdivisions.

Spirit — Ray of the Logos.

Its Triplicity — Monad—the Ruler of All

Individuality—Atma—Buddhi—Manas in the Causal Body.

Personality—Lower Mental—Astral—Physical.

Buddhic and Atmic Bodies—Their Birth.

Permanent Atoms. If possible, study the subject in *A Study in Consciousness*.

Brotherhood, a Fact in Nature.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

Realize how much of the little we know about the spiritual planes

- (1) is a mere theory to you, logical, or perhaps only interesting.
- (2) has become a fact to you because of an inner conviction which nothing can shake.
- (3) is a matter of conscious personal experience.

Having studied the Monad-Individuality-Personality manifestations, reach now beyond that triplicity to the Unity beyond it, the One Life, manifested on all planes, in all beings—Life which is Love.

Practise constantly the consciousness of the Presence of GOD in *everything*.

BUDDHIC EXPRESSION OF LIFE —

Remember that when you simply understand people, as a dissector understands muscle and tissue, you are only using the mind.

When to your understanding you add sympathy, loving appreciation, you are manifesting the Buddhist expression of life.

The mark of Buddhist activity is that warmth of loving appreciation which comes from the realization of the Unity of Life.

When does preliminary, or pre-natal Buddhist activity begin in man?

When does birth on the Buddhist plane take place?

What place has the ideal of Initiation in your life?

Try to distinguish the Buddhist element—if there is any—in all the activities that come to your notice, however hidden it may be under personal coloring.

Watch for it, rejoice when you find it.

Judge your own life from that angle.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE HELPED BY CHARTS AND SYMBOLS — Realize the following:

- (1) While man is centered below the Buddhist Plane, his attitude is *centripetal*, self-seeking, self-centered.
- (2) His bodies, including the causal, show this; they have an enclosing surface, an egg-shell, imprisoning the Self.
- (3) After birth on the Buddhist Plane, repolarization takes place; the attitude becomes centrifugal, out-raying.
- (4) Shape of the Buddhist body: *Rays*, without enclosing circumference.

NOW VISUALIZE —

- (1) Life—the Self—in the centre of your being, like the hub of a wheel.
- (2) Its out-going energy rushing to the circumference of your being, like the spokes of the wheel.
- (3) Upon reaching the circumference, each spoke, called back by the centripetal force, turning at right angle to itself and meeting the next spoke; all spokes thus turning back forming the rim of the wheel.

Think of this as the Wheel of Birth and Death,
Turning so long as there is self-seeking.

NOW LET THE SELF GO —

Straighten out the bent ends of the spokes (the hooks of grasping thought-forms) and the imprisoning rim disappears.

The Wheel of Birth and Death is transcended
The Wheel is now a radiating Sun of Life and Love.

BROTHERHOOD A FACT IN NATURE —

How does Brotherhood manifest

- (1) As a mere intellectual conception?
- (2) As a realized fact in consciousness?

How much Brotherhood is already manifesting in the various departments of world activities? Amid your own surroundings? Observe definite instances.

Do you rejoice at every manifestation you recognize, so that you may add life to its life?

How do *you* yourself live Brotherhood? Face yourself frankly.

ATMIC PLANE —

What is the special characteristic of Atmic manifestation?

What are the preliminary expressions of Atmic power at the human stage?

What are the results of

- (1) Developing power before love?
- (2) Developing love before power?
- (3) Developing both simultaneously?

Recall examples of special cases, if you can.

Decide what is the way *for you*.

Realize what obstacle the clinging to personal identity is to spiritual realization.

Let the small self go. Be free. Be BIG.

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CHAPTERS VII AND VIII. REINCARNATION.

TOPICS — *Reincarnation* the mode of Evolution for all beings, human and non-human.

SECOND OUTPOURING — Evolution of Life, on the form and consciousness sides, through the six sub-human Kingdoms.

THIRD OUTPOURING — Individualization; human and superhuman evolution.

GUIDING CONSCIOUSNESS — (1) Before individualization. (2) After individualization. Study, if possible, the subject of Group Souls in *A Study in Consciousness*.

VARIOUS MODES OF INDIVIDUALIZATION.

FOUR HUMAN STAGES — (1) Desire ruling; (2) desire and mind struggling for supremacy; (3) Mind ruling; (4) Spirit ruling.

LOGIC AND JUSTICE OF REINCARNATION.

PROOFS OF REINCARNATION.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

Study and compare conditions in countries

- (1) Where the teaching of Reincarnation is accepted.
- (2) Where belief in one single life is the current belief.

Is the broad and patient view of life following upon belief in Reincarnation incompatible with whole-hearted, energetic efforts towards progress?

What do you think would be the result, if belief in Reincarnation became general in Western countries?

To what extent has the thought of Reincarnation already permeated the Western world in religion, poetry, literature, the stage and screen, etc.? The thoughts of individuals?

What result has belief in Reincarnation had upon the lives of people you know?

How has that belief influenced your own life?

A belief which does not express itself in life is a mere intellectual theory.

From the beginning of the Universe, the Monad in you has determined the way he shall go. Try to find out his will by judging your present life.

- (1) Distinguish the permanent from the impermanent. Brush aside personal, superficial colorings due to present circumstances, national and otherwise, the influence of the surrounding thought-atmosphere, etc.
- (2) Try to recognize the fundamental qualities you brought into this life, the special character you have been steadily developing through the varying conditions of your present incarnation.

You may thus discover a central theme, the Key-note of your being—the Will of the Monad.

According to your co-operation with that Will, will be the rapidity of your realization of the Goal.

A MEDITATION ON REINCARNATION.

- I. You have lived in many lands and will live in many more.

While you are incarnated in one country, it is your duty to give to it your very best love and service in gratitude for what it does for you, from the cradle to the grave, in the way of food, clothing, education, opportunities, etc.

Thanks to the work of your countrymen, you have some leisure for higher pursuits. You are also working, it is true; but think of what your work would be, if you were alone on a desert island and had to provide for yourself all the necessities of life.

Therefore, recognize what you owe to your country and your countrymen, and serve accordingly.

That leads to true patriotism, *wise Nationalism*.

- II. Though you may not remember your past lives, the countries in which you have lived have left upon you an indelible impression by their culture, their religions, arts, living conditions, etc.

Nearly all of what you have stored up as permanent progress was gained in them. Your next life may again be spent where you lived before, giving you the opportunity of discharging some of the obligations incurred.

By studying history, you might perhaps recognize in what countries and among what peoples some of your fundamental qualities and faculties were developed.

You would probably find that you have some traits in common with practically every people on earth, including even the primitive tribes whose conditions you may have shared long ago.

Such recognition brings about a realization of the kinship of the whole human race; narrow national prejudices and dislikes vanish; dividing frontiers disappear without destroying wise love of country.

That leads to *Wise Internationalism*.

Only wise Internationalism can bring about Universal Peace.

- III. Now pass beyond the unity of the human race.

You have evolved through all the Kingdoms of Nature, even as every child does during his pre-natal life.

REALIZE UNITY ON THE FORM SIDE.

Trace back the similarity between your own bodily characteristics, functions and responses and those

- (1) In the *Animal Kingdom*, where it is evident.
- (2) In the *Vegetable Kingdom*, where it is also evident.
We have here birth, the beating of a heart, the circulation of the sap, breathing, feeding, reproduction, resting, death.
- (3) In the *Mineral Kingdom*, where it is less apparent, but nevertheless real.
We have here birth and death. Deeper knowledge may disclose some day the beating of a heart, breathing and circulation, sense avenues, possibly through the axes of growth; even reproduction of some kind, in crystals especially. The wonderful work of Professor Jagadish Chandra Bose is only a beginning in that direction.
- (4) In the *Elemental Kingdoms*
Birth, life, death of thought-forms— real entities, even if temporary.
They reproduce their kind in those into whose subtle bodies they find entrance.

REALIZE UNITY ON THE CONSCIOUSNESS SIDE.

Now trace back the similarity between our modes of consciousness and those in the lower Kingdoms.

For example, the expression of choice and love

- (1) In the *Animal Kingdom*, where it is quite evident.
- (2) In the *Vegetable Kingdom*, where there is more choice than we usually think.
Vines have been known to turn away from conveniently near iron supports and to send tendrils to quite a distance towards wooden pegs which seemed more comfortable than the cold metal.

Plants respond warmly to the love of those who care for them.
You might find many other examples for yourself.

(3) In the *Mineral Kingdom*.

Chemical affinity is no doubt far more than a mechanical process.
A machine often knows its owner and refuses to work for another.
Here again, you may find other examples.

(4) In the *Elemental Kingdoms*.

The seeking and enjoyment of heavier and stronger thought and emotion vibrations, etc.

Those are mere hints. You may trace many other qualities and faculties from their human expressions back to their elemental correspondences; also germinal mind; even the foreshadowing of that yearning for Unity which is the mark of unfolding Spirituality.

As we brood and realize more and more the unity of all life, dividing lines between the Kingdoms vanish, even as human frontiers vanish before true internationalism.

Our small personal selves grow dim; we feel ourselves slipping into the mighty River of Life

IV. But we realize also the glorious divinity of each drop of Life pursuing its pilgrimage through the various Kingdoms on to heights lost in the splendor of the future.

We consider the appalling diversity of methods whereby each unit, life after life, Kingdom after Kingdom, seeks to release more and more the God within. Each is truly the Way, the Truth and the Life unto himself, and the Way of one is not the Way of another.

How, then, could we condemn another, because his Way is not our Way? Truly, he may often blunder in his efforts; but how can we know even when he blunders?

No longer do we try to force our Way upon him so as to "help him"; we feel deep respect for his divinity as well as a deep sympathy for his struggle. The God within us responds to the God within him—and that is the "Power that maketh all things new."

Gone is the sense of injustice, of uncertainty as to the final outcome which used to torture us.

The End is sure, and Reincarnation has become to us the triumphant march of all beings, all drops of Life, towards the Ocean of Divinity.

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CHAPTER IX. KARMA.

TOPICS — *Karma* — Its definition and general characteristics.

Mental, Astral, Physical Karma.

Ripe — of character — future, or in the making.

Collective; national; of accidents; sudden death; suicide,

Lords of Karma — End of Karma.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

- I. The steady pressure of Evolution, unhampered, would always provide for all beings the best and happiest conditions.
But in our unwisdom and our misuse of our power of choice, we put obstacles in the way and constantly disturb the equilibrium of the universe, which has to be restored at all costs. That is Karma — neither reward nor punishment, but cause and effect.
- II. Study the effect of the teaching of Karma
 - (1) Upon those who reject it and prefer to "blame God."
 - (2) Upon those who accept it, but feel crushed by its supposed inevitableness.
 - (3) Upon those who realize that the Law of Karma, when understood, is our greatest help. We are not bound. As we disturbed the equilibrium in the past, even so can we restore it through Knowledge of the Law and right choice.
Where do you place yourself? Can you recall in your own life instances that prove your opinion? Not mere intellectual speculations when everything was going smoothly?
- III. Two ways whereby equilibrium can be restored:
 - (1) *The Way of Love*; neutralizing past wrong by doing good.
For example: If a disagreeable, a hostile person comes into your life, you have probably injured him in the past. Instead of merely suffering through him, return good for evil, and put thus an end to the wrong-doing of the past.
 - (2) *The Way of Suffering*.
But if you return hostility for hostility, you will suffer through that man, possibly in more lives than one, until you understand the Law and cease from wrong.
Hence, the spiritual law of returning good for evil, the wisdom of doing so at all times, day by day.
Consider everyone who comes near you, whether friendly or unfriendly, as one to whom you owe a debt, and serve him accordingly, deliberately and lovingly. Love is truly the fulfilling of the Law.
Work out in the same manner every pleasant or painful circumstance of your life; understand its probable cause and learn its lesson.
- IV. All lives are linked together. But most of our Karma is not due to past lives; it is made from day to day.
A wise review of the day ere retiring to rest will show this; instead of blaming past lives and saying, "it is my Karma," we should learn to realize our present foolishness and to choose more wisely.
- V. Karma made on all planes, spiritual, mental, astral, physical; each working on its own plane and reacting on the planes below.

SPIRITUAL — *Good Motive*.

- (1) A mistaken action done with a good motive brings an improved character because of the good motive, but also suffering because of the suffering caused by the mistake.
The good motive results in a permanent gain — character; the mistake is a passing suffering which teaches wisdom.
- (2) But a good action done with a bad or selfish motive brings good physical conditions truly because of the happiness given, but also a deterioration of character — a permanent harm and a passing gain.

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Hence the importance of the motive. Seek a good motive in everyone; you will find it often where you least expect it, and judge people thereby.

MENTAL — Trace the effect of your thoughts

- (1) *Upon yourself*; they build your character and faculties; they mould your present mental body and prepare that of a future life.
- (2) *Upon others*; affecting them as explained in Chapter IV, thus making ties with them, pleasant or unpleasant.

ASTRAL — Trace the effect of your desires and emotions

- (1) *Upon yourself*; they build your character, mould your present astral body, prepare that of the future; they create future environment and conditions.
Desire brings us the objects and conditions desired, but these often prove a curse rather than a blessing. According to our character is our use of circumstances.
- (2) *Upon others*. Our desires and emotions affect others powerfully and make thereby future ties, good or evil.
They do not affect only those we know. Some thought or emotion-form of ours may push a man we never met into committing a wrong action, or urge him to do good. We become thus sharers in his Karma, good or evil, and add him to our associates of the future. We also add all the time our small share to the collective Karma of our country.

PHYSICAL — Trace the effect of your actions

- (1) *Upon yourself*. Repeated actions result in habits, good or bad.
Wasted opportunities are a most fruitful source of future limitations and delay in evolution.
- (2) *Upon others*, by causing happiness which shall bring us happiness, or misery which shall bring us suffering; by helping them, which shall bring us favorable opportunities, or hindering them, which shall bring limitations.

VI. We are responsible for every thought, emotion and action.

We increase, or lighten, the "heavy Karma of the World," all the time.

It was merciful that we did not know it, when evil predominated in us, or even later, when good and evil were evenly balanced.

But now, good predominates. In balancing our daily ledger, the good should not only neutralize the evil, but leave a balance to our credit.

What are we going to do with our knowledge? Our freedom?

As we realize more and more that we are masters of our destiny, shall we not see to it that the balance of good to our credit shall grow daily?

VII. But good Karma binds as much as bad Karma.

So long as we do good, desiring the fruits of action, we are bound to return and enjoy those fruits.

Liberation comes only when we at last pass through life forgetting self and doing good, "renouncing the fruits of action," and yet working as those work who desire them. Then only is human Karma ended.

Then, the steady pressure of Evolution can work unhampered and swiftly carry us into the ranks of Those who, having transcended self, are truly the Saviors of the world.

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CHAPTER X. THE LAW OF SACRIFICE.

TOPICS ——— The Sacrifice of the LOGOS.

Sacrifice in all the Kingdoms including the human.

Steps in the lesson of Sacrifice as learned in the human Kingdom.

Ideal and Purpose of Sacrifice.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

- I. What does the Sacrifice of the LOGOS mean to you?
Why is it called Sacrifice? What is its nature, so far as we can grasp it?
All beings in the Solar System must reproduce that Sacrifice, because they are part of the LOGOS, and He Himself experiences and sacrifices in each unit of life.
We collectively are the Sacrifice of the LOGOS.
- II. What does Sacrifice mean to the form? To the life?
When is Sacrifice pain? When is it joy?
What does Sacrifice mean to most people? Why?
What does it mean to you? Why?
- III. Study the manifestations of Sacrifice in
 - (1) The mineral kingdom
 - (2) The vegetable kingdom
 - (3) The animal kingdom
 - (4) The human kingdom in
 - (a) the unevolved man;
 - (b) the ordinary man;
 - (c) the man aspiring towards spirituality;
 - (d) the spiritually evolved man.
 - (5) The Supermen.
- IV. Until what stage is Sacrifice compulsory? Why must it be so?
At what stage does it begin to be recognized as duty?
At what stage is it freely and gladly accepted?
Where do you place yourself? Why?
- V. Read as often as you can the last three or four pages of the Chapter on the Law of Sacrifice in *The Ancient Wisdom*, and permeate yourself with the ideal expressed in those pages.
Picture to yourself the power for good your own life would be, if every act, word, emotion, thought and aspiration were a joyous act of sacrifice; if even every sorrow were "made holy" through right understanding and willing acceptance.
What can you do to prepare yourself for such a truly God-like life?

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CHAPTER XI. MAN'S ASCENT.

TOPICS — Paths of Forthgoing and of Return.
Signs of the approaching end of human Evolution.
Special help given at that Stage.
Qualifications required.
Various Steps leading to the Path.
Various Steps on the Path.
Final Liberation.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

- I. Purpose of the Paths of Forthgoing and of Return: The unfolding of Divine Perfection.
 - (1) Teachers on the Path of Forthgoing: *Life* with its pains and pleasures, mistakes and successes, surroundings and associates, sensations, desires, emotions, thoughts, etc.; its self-centeredness.
 - (2) Path of Return. Transmutation and use of all those expressions of *Life*. Nothing to be killed, nothing new to be acquired; simply the right use of force previously misused. To achieve that, self-centeredness must become selflessness.
- II. Study the steps toward the unfolding of divine perfection in
 - (1) The pre-human kingdoms
 - (2) The human kingdom in
 - (a) the semi-animal (sensation ruling).
 - (b) the semi-human (sensation and mind struggling).
 - (c) the human (mind ruling).
 - (d) the semi-divine (intuition ruling). The Probationary Path. The Path Proper.
 - (3) The Superhuman Stage. (Unity ruling) Supermen, Masters, Saviors of the world.

At what stage does the Path of Return begin?
What signs indicate that stage?
Where do you place yourself? Why?
- III. Signs that one is already well on the Path of Return:
 - (1) A pure and controlled physical life; a purified body trained in efficiency.
 - (2) Purified and controlled emotions.
 - (3) Thoughts purified and steadied through right thinking, study and meditation.
 - (4) A quickening of the causal body showing itself in a fair measure of knowledge and wisdom, inner peace and serenity.
 - (5) A preliminary Buddhic realization of union; affection becoming unselfish compassion, an earnest desire to help all — not only those near and dear to us.
 - (6) Some measure at least of Atmic power and bigness.

Those characteristics are unequally developed in people according to the Ray, or temperament. Perfection is still far ahead, but a good beginning must be made.
- IV. No psychic faculties are required. They are in no way a sign of spiritual unfoldment and are often a hindrance rather than a help.
The time to develop them is after the Second Initiation.
But intuition must reach the brain consciousness with ever-increasing clearness. The link between both is strengthened by meditation and constant aspiration, the practice of unity, by loving service to all.
Signs of success: Bigness of judgment and understanding, inner peace, ceasing from worry, a constant helpfulness, discreet and tactful.
If you aspire to tread the Path, judge by that standard your daily life — not merely your aspirations.

- V. *Four Ways* for the man who is approaching the Probationary Path to gain knowledge about its possibilities:

- (1) The companionship of those who are on the Path.
- (2) Hearing and reading about it.
- (3) Hard thinking.
- (4) The practice of virtue. (*Invisible Helpers*, C. W. Leadbeater.)

The practice of virtue is a necessary preliminary step *for all*; but knowledge added to virtue leads one more swiftly on to the Path.

Be deeply thankful to those who have helped you to gain that knowledge.

- VI. "When the pupil is ready the Master is ready."

Put yourself as much as possible in the current of the Masters' life.

Read what you can about Them; try to feel Their love, Their longing that you, too, shall tread the Path They have trodden.

They are watching, ready to help; but They never force that help, we must want it.

It does not matter whether you already know your Master; *He* knows and will help if you will.

- VII. First definite step out of ordinary humanity: Being placed on probation by a Master.

The race is evolving, many are getting ready for that step. Don't think of it as far away in the future, that thought creates a barrier.

Live now as if you were on probation.

- VIII. *Aim on the Path*: To quicken and hasten the unfoldment of Divinity.

Divinity is One, all-inclusive, like the white light.

As the white light breaks up into differentiated colors, so does the One Divinity show itself as differentiated virtues and qualifications, when passing through the prism of manifestation.

Special Qualifications to be evolved by the probationer.

- (1) *Discrimination* between the Real and the Unreal.

Learn from your successes and failures when you used it, or failed to do so.

We usually lack discrimination when we offend people.

We grow in discrimination through meditation, experience and practice.

Work this out fully; only discrimination makes real progress possible.

- (2) *Desirelessness or Dispassion.*

Desirelessness is not indifference. Work and aspire whole-heartedly, with enthusiasm, as if you desired the "fruits of action"; but be not bound by desire.

Signs of growing success.

While enthusiasm grows, disappointments, failure of personal plans no longer hurt; one kind of work is as welcome as another; desire for personal advantage, position or recognition ceases.

Do not disguise your failures in this respect under the garb of supposed interest in the work. Put shams away!

- (3) *Six Jewels of the Mind.*

(a) *Control of the Mind.* (See Chapter IV, *The Mental Plane.*)

(b) *Control of the Body.* A life pure and dignified, useful and efficient.

A controlled life should bring health of body.

(c) *Tolerance.* Understanding and sympathy — not indifference.

Every unit of Life evolves according to the will of his Monad.

All are doing what is according to the law of their being. How could we blame anyone? "Virtuous indignation," once so useful, has no place here.

But be sure not to mistake for Tolerance a self-satisfied looking down upon others and a willingness to wait until they grow up to your stature. Some, while showing faults, even vices you have outgrown, may be farther on spiritually than you.

(d) *Endurance.* A cheerful acceptance of hardships *for ourselves*, but a heart full of compassion for another's woe. Endurance is not a hardening of yourself against people and things. Real endurance feels while accepting.

- (e) *Faith.* We are God, in Him we can do all things.
What we are pleased to call humility, holds us down. Faith is not pride;
Faith removes mountains.
The Master who watches, can and will help us if we will, even as we, at our stage,
give our help to those who accept it.
- (f) *Balance.* What can shake one who realizes that he is God and can do all things?
Through constant practice, learn to recognize instantly when you are on the
point of losing your balance, so as to steady yourself.
- (4) *An intense desire for liberation* — A "burning desire" indeed.
Liberation, not from earth life and its struggles, but from the fetters of the
elemental self in us which keeps the Self imprisoned.
Distinguish how much disgust with earthly conditions enters into your desire for
Liberation. Face yourself frankly.
Liberate the Self in you, so that you may help to liberate Him in others.
Don't wait until some future life to work at those qualifications; *do it now*.
Perfection is not demanded of an aspirant, fortunately; else such an ideal might
discourage him . . .
But what some have done, others can do.
Each one who achieves, helps the whole world to achieve.

- IX. *The Path Proper* — The First, Second, Third and Fourth Initiations.
What Initiation is, only those know who have passed through its portal.
But all can prepare themselves for it by studying the "fetters" to be cast off at each step
and doing as much of that work as possible.
Then comes the glory of the Asekha Initiation and the Seven Paths open to the Master
of Life and Death.
- X. Rejoice that Some who have reached that exalted level, remain to watch and guide us.
Their very existence is for us the promise of the future.
Two Ways of knowing Them:
- (1) A number remember having seen Them on inner planes. But some of these have
since doubted their experience and the very existence of Those they saw.
- (2) Through an inner conviction due to contact on inner planes—a conviction which
nothing can shake, though the actual circumstances are not remembered.
This seems the surer way.
- But devotion and knowledge are not sufficient to reach Them; *Service* is Their key-note.
A man who knows nothing about Them, but who sacrifices and serves, is nearer to Them
than one who has constantly Their names on his lips, but does little for the world.
So, the Ideal is devotion, knowledge and service united.
Not necessarily striking work, for "service in the little things of life counts as much with
Them as the so-called greater services."
What is wanted is steady purpose and sacrifice.
What are *you* doing? Face yourself.
The needs of the world are great; helpers are wanted.
Will *you* answer the call?

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CHAPTER XII. BUILDING A KOSMOS.

TOPICS — *A Kosmos* — Our Solar System.

The LOGOS and His Helpers. The Great Plan.

The Field — Planetary Schemes and Globes — Chains and Rounds.

The Evolving Life — The various Kingdoms, Races and Sub-Races.

Builders and Rulers.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION —

- I. Permeate yourself with the Spirit of the Great Plan, its broad lines and unity, its magnitude, and the absolute certainty of the final achievement.
Lose sight, for the present, of the element of time, and watch the mighty stream of Life, of which you are a part, flowing irresistibly towards the perfection of its ultimate realization.
- II. Then, with the sense of security gained from that contemplation, study the details of the Plan. Realize how every unit of Life, however unimportant it may seem to our small vision, is cared for as if it were the whole—which it is in a way our brain consciousness cannot grasp. Each drop is the whole ocean; it is as important that a speck of dust should be helped towards perfection as a mighty Archangel, a future LOGOS. All Life is One.
- III. Realize the infinite patience of the Builders and Rulers, as They slowly guide Their charges according to the Plan, during staggering periods of time.
Learn from Them to be patient in your efforts to help.
You are serving your apprenticeship as a builder in some future world.
Rid yourself of hastiness and impatience at the slowness of the response given to your efforts. You yourself have been evolving as a human being since the Moon Chain. Contemplate the result so far; learn from it.
- IV. Realize now that this stupendous scheme is an incarnation of the LOGOS—the universe as a whole, His body; all creatures, the atoms, cells, organs in that body.
He is not perfect; He is learning and evolving in His universe, even as we are learning and evolving in our bodies.
As every unit of Life in the universe is His Life, He is experiencing in every unit, a blade of grass as well as a Planetary Spirit, and growing through that experience.
He is therefore experiencing *in and through you*. When *you* feel sorrow or joy, elation or depression, when *you* love, think, strive and aspire, and yearn towards perfection, *He* is feeling, loving, thinking, aspiring in you, and your yearning is His yearning towards the perfection He has set before Himself for His present incarnation, this world period of manifestation.
He is the One Doer, the One Knower, the One Lover; we are truly divine, for our divinity is His Divinity.
- V. How do you respond to that yearning of the LOGOS in you?
What are you doing, so that the small share of His universe entrusted to your keeping, your sphere of influence, shall grow according to His plan, with increasing perfection, with the least delay possible?
You are delaying Him when you linger by the road side.
You are hastening His fulfilment when you live up to the highest in you.
Do you realize the glory of your task?
Do you “shout for joy” at the beginning of each day, even as the Sons of God shouted for joy at the dawn of Creation?